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JOB SHARING IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT:

A CASE STUDY IN
THE CITY OF PALO ALTO

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Author
[New ways to work]

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Hours Part time
Public personnel administration Palo
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Facilitated by the Action Research
Liaison Office, Stanford University
June, 1975

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The authors

June, 1975

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a growing concern and dissatisfaction with the world of work as it is presently structured. One problem facing employers and employees is how to improve the quality of work and make it more personally satisfying. Another problem is how to absorb more workers into the employed labor force, an issue that is especially urgent now that the national unemployment rate has risen to 9.2% by May, 1975. Yet another problem is how to change the structure of work to accommodate women with family responsibilities, in light of an increase of 150% since 1948 in the labor force participation rate of married women with children. Job sharing - a situation in which two persons divide one full-time job between them - is being proposed by many as a potential solution to these varied problems.

In response to community and employee interest, the City of Palo Alto has instituted a job sharing program on a limited basis. While it is too early definitively to evaluate program performance, we will review it briefly and then explore the impressions and reactions of the many people involved. The present study was undertaken for the following purposes: to identify the costs and benefits of job sharing to the City, the sharers and other employees; to isolate the characteristics which make jobs amenable to sharing, for the purpose of expanding job sharing in the future; and to suggest ways of creating and facilitating job sharing programs in the future. We expect that this study will provide useful information to employers and individuals who are searching for "new ways to work."

JOB SHARING: WHAT, WHY, AND WHO

There are a variety of job sharing patterns.¹ In job splitting two persons divide one job between them to provide for full-time coverage.² Each is responsible for only half of the work. In a probation department, for example, each Probation Officer would be responsible for only half of the case load. Job pairing differs from job splitting in that two people divide the job but have equal responsibility for the total job. Each works half-time and together they provide full-time coverage. An example of job pairing would be a naturalist position where two employees work at different times to develop a display and program which they will jointly present at a City park. Another possible variant is called split level. Here the position is divided into two separate levels of training or ability. A city with a small planning department may hire a planner who also doubles as a draftsperson. This position could easily be adapted to a split level shared position with the benefit of cost savings to the employer.

¹Catalyst, "Flexible Work Schedules," A Catalyst Position Paper for Employers, (New York: {n.p.}, 1973).

²Some people use "job sharing" to describe this particular work pattern. Job sharing is, however, more appropriately used as a generic term to describe all these different work patterns and is used in this sense throughout the paper.



Job sharing in all of its variations differs from traditional part-time work in two ways. First, job sharing is less exploitative of the worker. A sharer's salary, which is a prorated full-time wage, is generally much higher than part-time wages. Part-time employees are often denied benefits which are available to the full-time worker. Job sharers should be included in any benefits available to other employees on a prorated basis. Secondly, job sharing encompasses a wider range of job types. Part-time work has traditionally been restricted to low-paying, low-skilled positions such as file clerk, typist and custodian. What is important for job sharing is not the skill level of the job but rather the divisibility or sharability of the component tasks.

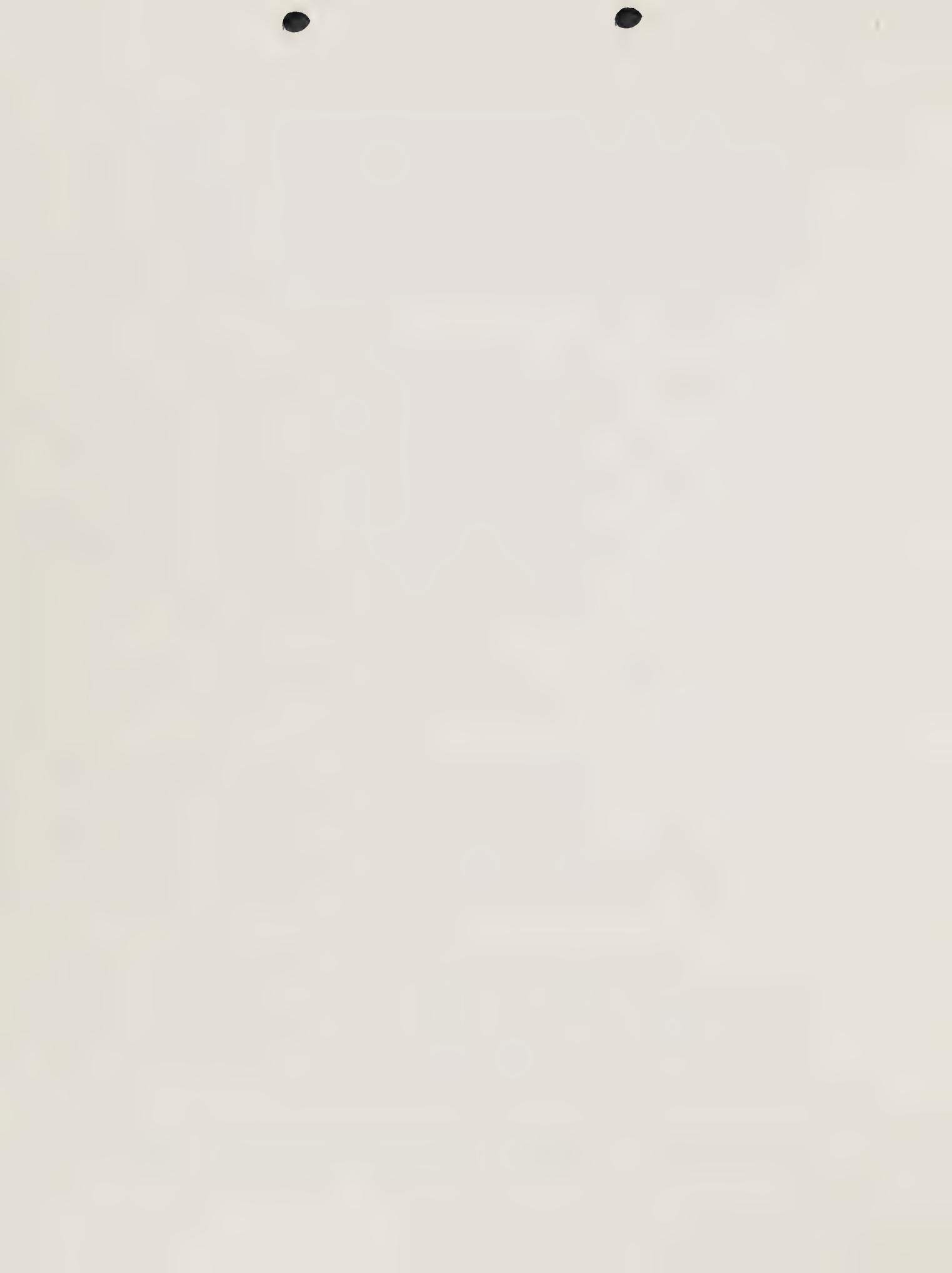
There are several reasons why people seem to be interested in job sharing. First, there are many who are not now employed and who would like to work but are unable or unwilling to work full-time. Some of these are women with family responsibilities who prefer not to work full-time while their children are young. Others are people with physical handicaps who are able to work for shorter periods but find full-time work too strenuous. Second, there are people currently employed full-time who want to work shorter hours in order to have more leisure time in which to pursue other interests. In this connection, job sharing also provides a unique opportunity for employees nearing retirement to ease into a new way of life and in many instances to train their replacement at the same time. A third type of person who might be interested in job sharing would be someone who has been laid off or who is about to be laid off due to an economic downturn. Here one might consider job sharing as an alternative to being unemployed.

Why would an employer be interested in job sharing? There has been much speculation recently concerning the potential benefits job sharing creates for the employer. In studying the case of Palo Alto we will deal specifically with these issues.

With the support and encouragement of New Ways To Work, a community organization devoted to increasing the availability of alternatives to the forty-hour work week, the City of Palo Alto began to think seriously about job sharing during the fall of 1974. A commitment was made to fill eight positions (one percent of the City's work force) with two sharers each by June, 1975. The program began in December of 1974 with two shared positions - Animal Control Officer and Naturalist. A third position, General Librarian, was added in March of 1975. All six job sharers in these positions are women.

The Animal Control Officers, working out of the Animal Service and Placement Center, patrol City streets to pick up stray, sick, or dead animals. They also investigate complaints from residents and place animals in quarantine. The work is quite self-contained; not much interaction is necessary between a sharer and the other Animal Control Officers. The sharers work at different times of the day, during peak periods, and each is responsible for a certain amount of work.

The basic function of the Naturalist is to plan, develop, and conduct nature-science programs for residents at the Baylands Nature Interpretive Center,



the Junior Museum, and the City's large Foothills Park. The job sharers are also responsible for planning and developing special projects and exhibits. They generally work at peak hours, come into occasional contact with other employees, and must coordinate the work between themselves to a certain degree.

Librarians are responsible for selecting and maintaining library materials and assisting the public in the use of the City's many branch libraries. The librarian position requires more interaction between the sharers themselves and between the sharers and other employees than do the other positions. Here, the sharers' schedules vary from week to week, but are generally structured to provide some coverage during peak hours.

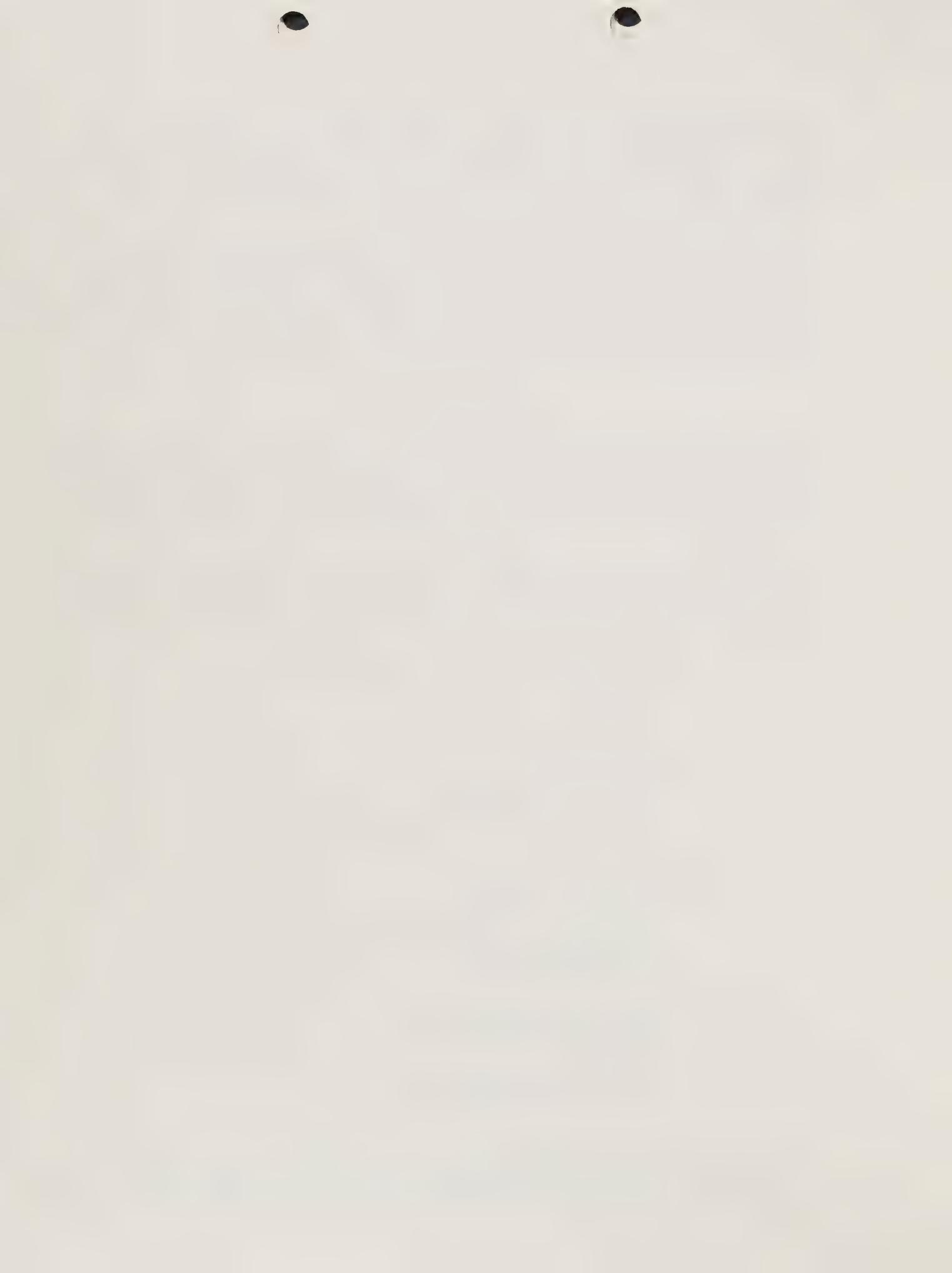
METHODOLOGY

In order to obtain a rounded picture of the job sharing program we contacted the sharers, their supervisors, and their co-workers. We also obtained information from other employees and department heads not directly involved in the program as well as members of the administrative staff and a union representative.

A personal interview was conducted with each of the six sharers. Interviews were also conducted with the Director of Nature and Science, Director of Animal Services, Director of Libraries and Supervising Librarian.³ Specific topics were covered in each interview. They are as follows:

1. How the City has set up the job to be shared
 - schedule
 - location
2. Nature of job
 - qualifications
 - level of responsibility
 - number of people affected by sharers' work
 - functions or easily divisible sections
3. Coordination of work activity
 - continuity required
 - time spent on communication (written or oral)
 - readjustment of others' work activities
 - scheduling problems
 - extra supervisory time (asked of supervisors only)
4. Interpersonal relationships
 - personality conflicts, friction between job sharers and co-workers
 - sharers' morale and satisfaction with job
 - morale in the department

³Because the position of General Librarian became a shared position only a week before interviews were conducted, reactions of sharers, supervisors and co-workers reflect what is anticipated more than what has been experienced.



5. Work performance
 - measurement of ...
 - comparison of sharers and full-timers in terms of productivity, absenteeism, tardiness, and personal leave
6. Benefits and costs
 - to sharers
 - to City
 - to co-workers
7. What kinds of jobs could and could not be easily shared -characteristics
8. Personal statistics (asked of sharers only)
 - length of employment with the City
 - marital status, approximate age, size of family, and education

In order to obtain reactions from co-workers, a written survey was conducted in each department where jobs are being shared. The surveys contained questions about any benefits or problems of job sharing in the areas of interpersonal relationships, coordination of work activity, and work performance. One question was open-ended in order to solicit reactions which might not fit into these categories. Respondents were asked to comment on how many jobs in their department could be shared, what characteristics made them sharable, what jobs could not be shared, and why. A final question concerned the preference or willingness of the respondents to work in a department where jobs are shared. The same information was also solicited from employees of two departments which are not yet involved in job sharing.

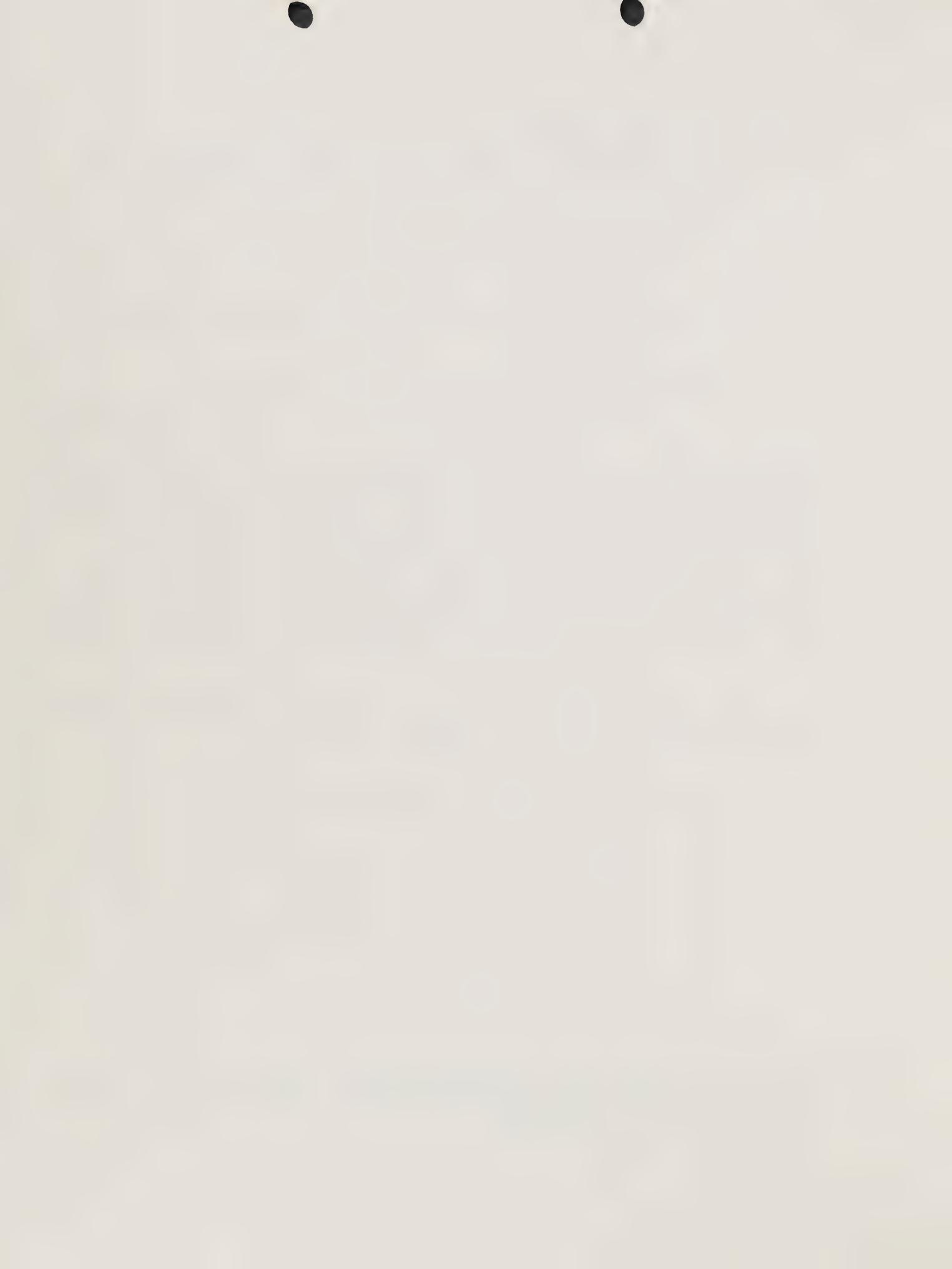
All surveys were anonymous. Seventy-four surveys were handed out and thirty-eight were returned, for a response rate of fifty-one percent. The demographic variables of the survey respondents are as follows:

Table 1. Sex and Age of Survey Respondents

SEX		AGE	
Female	24	Under 25	7
Male	10	25 - 50	23
NA*	4	Over 50	4
<hr/> N = 38		<hr/> N = 38	

*NA means "Not Ascertained"

Finally, three additional members of the administrative staff were contacted for general reactions and information concerning financial costs of the program. A union representative was interviewed in order to get an idea of labor's perspective on this issue.



BENEFITS FOR THE CITY OF PALO ALTO

Proponents of job sharing repeatedly assert that the benefits or advantages which can result from the implementation of such a program are numerous, both for employers and for employees. In this study we set out to find what, if any, might be the general advantages of a job sharing program for the City of Palo Alto as a whole. Of particular concern here are employee perceptions of the benefits for the City, for obviously some benefits for Palo Alto must already be perceived by City officials for them to be willing to initiate such a program. As one City employee comments, "There is no way the City is losing; otherwise they {the City} wouldn't do it."

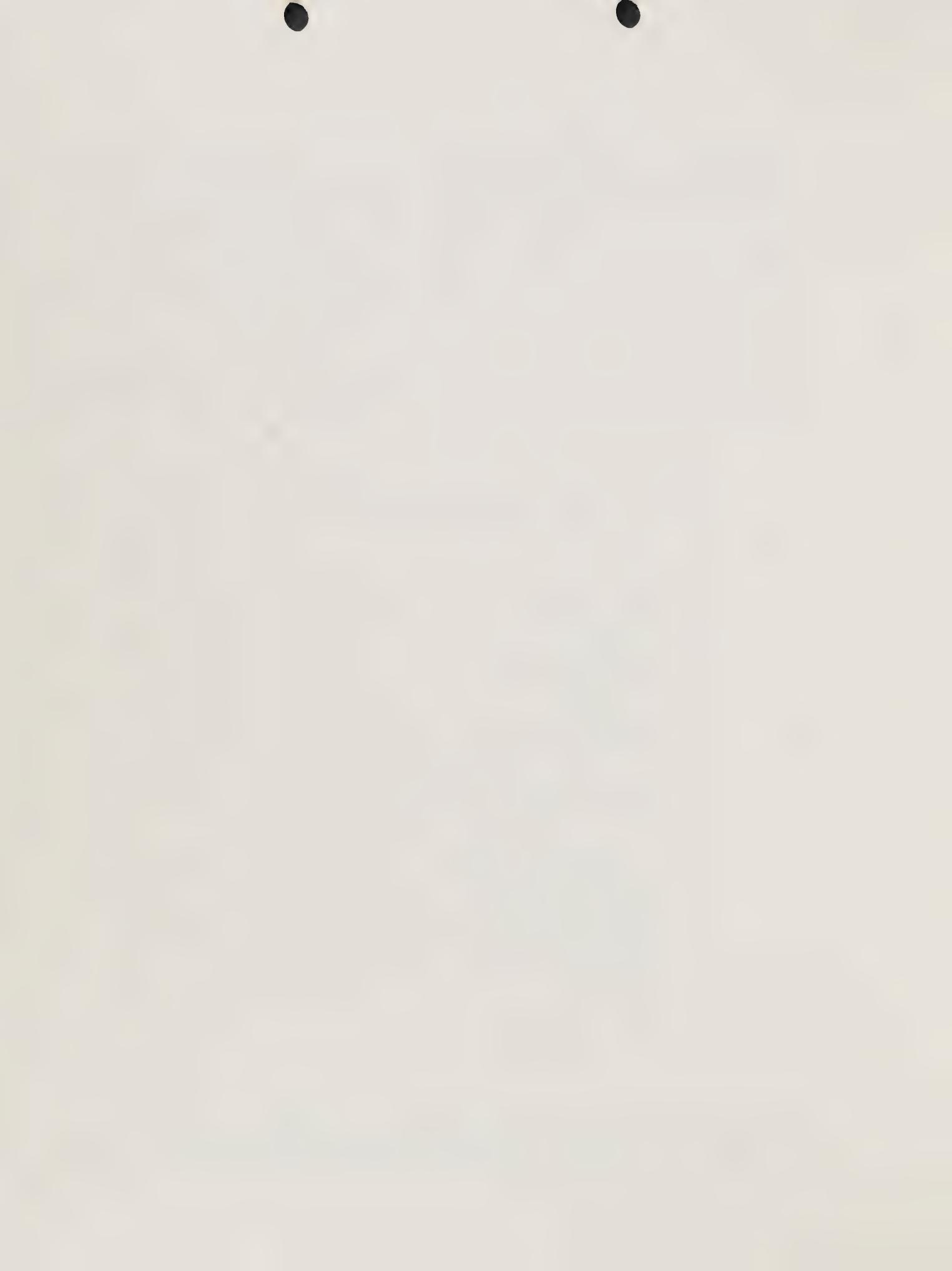
City employees, job sharers, and supervisors, responding to the question, "In what ways, if any, do you think the City of Palo Alto could benefit from a job sharing program?" cite four major benefits. These we label job creation, diversity, productivity, and flexibility. (See Table 2, below)

Table 2. Benefits to the City of Palo Alto as Perceived by Survey Respondents

Benefits	No. of Mentions
Job creation	13
Diversity (+)*	10
Flexibility (+)	7
Productivity (+)	7
Efficiency (+)	6
Morale (+)	6
Fatigue (-)	4
Affirmative action	2
Free time (for employee) (+)	2
Incentive to enter labor market (+)	2
Opportunities for women (+)	2
Decentralization of power, control, responsibility	1
Income to families (+)	1
Job satisfaction (+)	1
Save money for City	1
Training opportunities (+)	1
No benefits	2
Maybe some benefits	2
No answer	6

*(+)--an increase in
(-)--a decrease in

The benefit most frequently mentioned by City employees is the creation of more jobs "for its people." Through job sharing, they note, more jobs can be created and consequently more people can be employed. Moreover, employment



can be provided for various types of people. Jobs can be created not only for those who simply seek employment of some kind (either part-time or full-time), but also, as one employee notes, for "qualified people who cannot maintain a full-time work schedule." In addition to this, one employee sees job sharing as a way to retain certain people who are now on the City's payroll. In her words, a job can be provided "for an employee who is skilled but who would be terminated because of job completion, lack of work or {lack of} funds." This last aspect particularly interests the union involved.⁴ Its "Coordinator for job sharing" emphasizes that this type of action would help the worker retain some economic viability and help the union retain its membership. He feels that workers should have the option of reducing their hours to part-time rather than being cut out completely.

The second benefit City employees mention most often is diversity - the notion that through job sharing the opportunity arises for bringing more ideas, talents, skills and thus creativity to a job or a program than would otherwise be available. As one employee puts it, "It is better to have two heads in a position than one." A supervisor strongly believes that the work force should include people in different stages of life and with corresponding diverse perspectives. She specifically mentions the advantage of developing a work force composed of varying age groups. In another department the supervisor reports that an increase in overall department productivity directly attributable to the job sharing program is, in part, due to more diversity in employee talents and background.

Productivity is the third benefit city employees frequently cite. Employees primarily perceive job sharing as creating a work situation in which a "higher level of performance" can be achieved due to shorter working hours. They imply that a reduction in fatigue (and a resultant increase in energy, enthusiasm, and concentration), is highly correlated with an increase in productivity. The job sharers and supervisors strongly concur on this point.

A second reason for increased productivity, mentioned by a supervisor, is that the sharers have only a limited time in which to work. A sharer comments that less time is now wasted on the job. She, in fact, thinks about her job at home and "comes in ready to work."

A third aspect of increased productivity is related to the fact that sharers are often scheduled during peak hours. A sharer comments that she really works for four hours; whereas, in some cases, people on eight hour shifts are inclined to sit and watch the clock "during dead hours." Some jobs, especially those dealing with the public, have several periods of heavy business throughout the day. Employees working during these hours will, out of necessity, be more productive than those working during both busy and slack periods.

Proponents of job sharing cite reduced absenteeism and tardiness as two factors contributing to increased productivity. In the experience of the City

⁴Service Employees International Union



of Palo Alto, however, there is no noticeable difference between job sharers and full-time employees with regard to these variables.

Unfortunately, job sharing benefits to an employer are difficult to measure in terms of dollar estimates. Changes in productivity are the most easily quantifiable. Yet they are still dependent upon the specific job and employer and therefore cannot be generalized. For example, a production-line setting where a worker's piece-work completion rate is figured is easier to analyze in economic terms than is a librarian's advice to a patron.

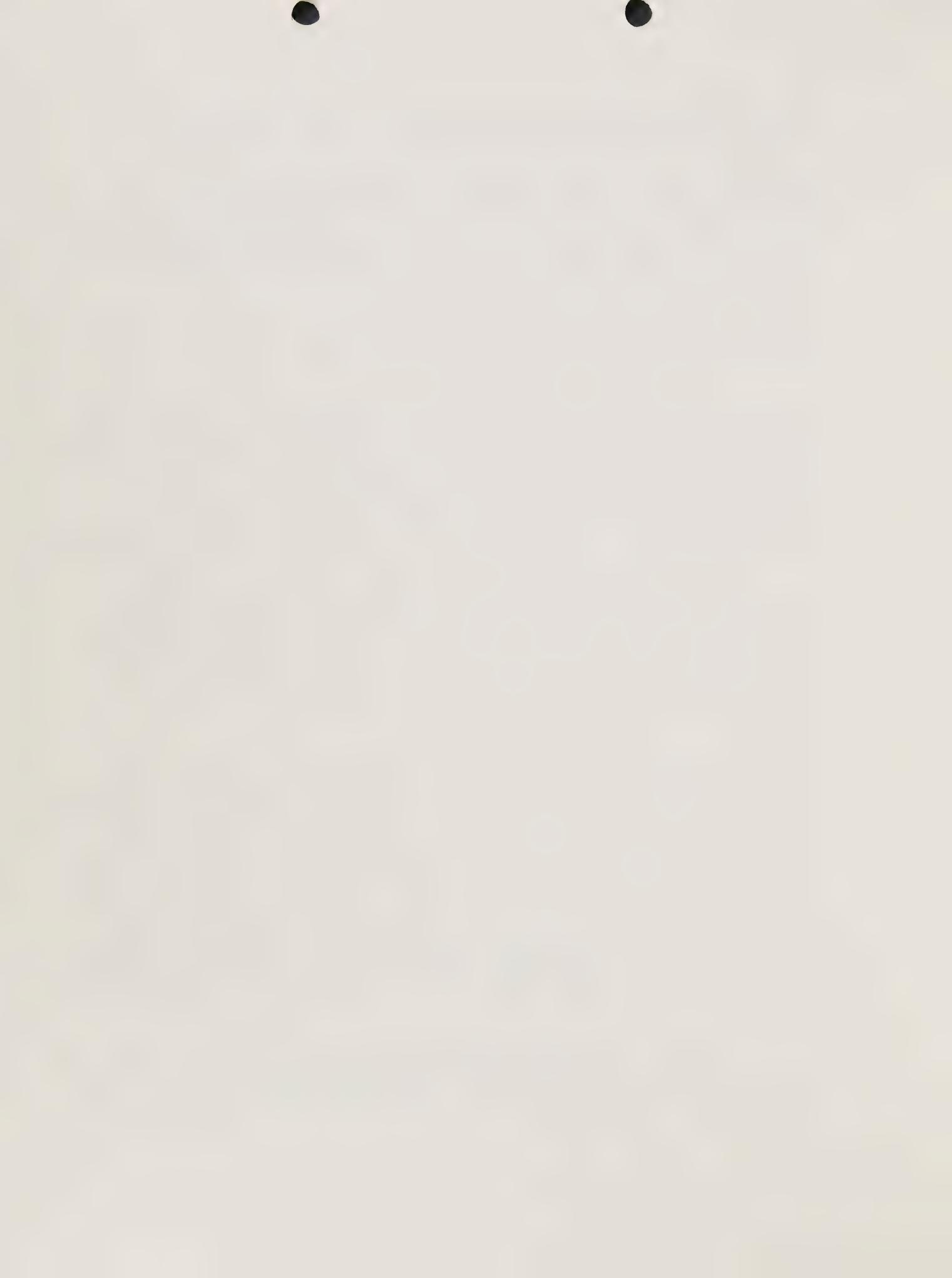
Finally, job sharing can also lend flexibility to work scheduling. City employees note two kinds of scheduling flexibility:

1. Employees can be scheduled for better coverage during "peak hours." All of the departments are taking advantage of this possibility. In this regard, all three supervisors report that their departments are significantly and positively affected by job sharing. Increased flexibility for peak hour coverage is especially valuable where scheduling has to cover more than eight hours a day. In the Animal Control Department, for example, one sharer works in the early morning and the other in the early evening. The slow period in the afternoon is bypassed completely.

2. Employees who share a job could "cover" for one another in a variety of circumstances. As described by one employee, "In case of illness, vacations, leave, etc., one half-time job holder {a job sharer} could take over the entire job temporarily if city policy would permit." It is however, a specific City policy not to use job sharers as last minute substitutes or to keep them "on call." While the City is therefore losing a potential benefit, it is protecting the integrity of the shared position.

Several other potential benefits to the City are also perceived. These additional factors should be mentioned here. Because of the flexibility job sharing lends to hiring practices, affirmative action goals can be more readily achieved. Job sharing will attract both minority and non-minority women who would not normally apply for city positions. One employee mentions an issue with which women are concerned. As (s)he states, "The area is full of women college graduates who don't work during child-rearing years because part-time work is not worth it - not financially or in terms of responsibility. {A City-wide job sharing program would} gain strong support of women." Especially useful in the implementation of affirmative action is the split-level concept. Minorities and women without requisite skills can be paired in on-the-job training with experienced employees who prefer to work half-time.

A rise in morale is considered by many as a possible benefit of job sharing. As one supervisor says, "The two job sharers each have many interests other than their work with the City. When they do work for the City they are extremely productive and seem to be more motivated {than the full-time employees}."



Although only one person mentioned the following benefit it is worthy of note because of its originality. This person suggests that job sharing could lead to a "decentralization of responsibility and control, thus {resulting in} more power- and decision-sharing among more people." This could result from a job sharing program that is widespread and implemented on many levels.

On the whole, it appears that City employees, including the job sharers themselves and supervisors, perceive a job sharing program to be quite beneficial for the City of Palo Alto.

COSTS FOR THE CITY OF PALO ALTO

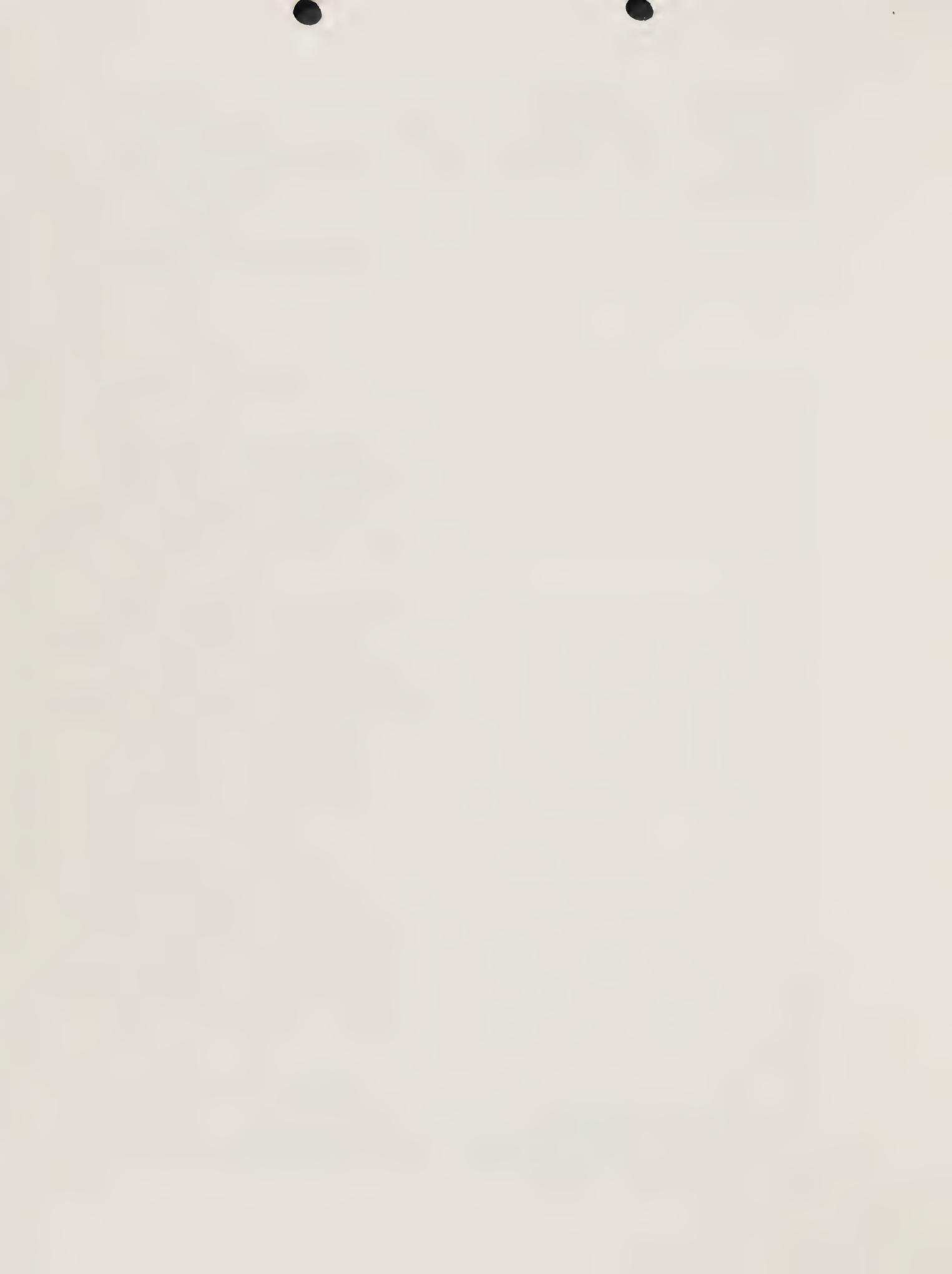
Overall there are fewer perceived costs than benefits for the City of Palo Alto due to the job sharing program.

One of the first costs facing the City comes in the form of the periods during which supervisors, sharers, and other employees adapt to the new system. The Director of Libraries notes that "There will probably have to be some attitude adjustments to the new system on the part of the employees at first." She also predicts that there will "have to be some time {spent} experimenting with schedules {in order} to determine the best arrangement."

Increased time spent on communications can also be a cost of job sharing, especially where the nature of the work requires close communication between sharers, or between sharers and co-workers. The Supervising Librarian anticipates that there will be more time spent on communication by the branch library due to job sharing. Situations which arise with the public during the day, changes in department procedures, announcements, and specific shared tasks all require a smooth flow of information. She predicts that there will be an increased reliance on written communication. The sharers indicate that they must be particularly careful in writing notes to others to keep them posted on what they have been doing. Another sharer mentions the more basic problem of "maintaining smoothly flowing work."

A related cost of job sharing to the City is a rise in the amount of supervisory time required by the department. The Supervising Librarian anticipates that more of her time will be spent on communication and coordination of work activity. The Director of Nature and Science indicates that job sharing does require more supervisory time at first but that the amount of time he spends on this has decreased as employees in the department have become used to working in the new situation. The third supervisor also reports an increase. Yet he comments, "The fact that I spend more time on paper work is directly attributable to the increase in job sharers productivity; and that's the kind of work I like!"

The only problem arising from job sharing with regard to scheduling is a "loss of potential benefits." In some cases, a sharer may be on a number of committees which require attendance at various meetings. If the sharer's schedule has to be arranged so that (s)he can attend during working hours, this may mean sacrificing some of the coverage during peak times.



Aside from the above disadvantages, job sharing does entail other, more quantifiable costs. These costs are more easily defined than benefits because they are employer independent, i.e. the employer has little or no choice whether or not to incur them. Catalyst, a non-profit organization engaged in research on employment for women, identifies several areas of quantifiable costs with different degrees of employer independence.⁵ These include statutory benefits, compensatory benefits, and supplemental benefits. Statutory benefits include social security benefits, state disability insurance, and workmen's compensation. Employers must pay statutory benefits for each permanent employee. Compensatory benefits include payment for time not worked - paid vacation, paid holidays, paid jury duty, sick leave, etc. Although these costs are quantifiable, they are not fixed; they can be negotiated at will to conform to the employer's desired benefit package. Supplementary benefits include any other benefits that supplement an employee's income package: life contingencies (medical insurance, life insurance), financial programs (pension, stock purchase, tax shelter), and miscellaneous services (tuition payments, various discounts on goods and services, free meals, etc.). Only one supplementary benefit, medical insurance, is likely to be of any significant cost to the employer; all others can be prorated, and even medical insurance costs can vary with the type of coverage provided.

According to the City Controller, the City of Palo Alto pays the required statutory benefits, pays into the same medical plan for all employees, and in all other areas exactly prorates costs according to the employee's salary.

An additional area of employer costs lies in the field of administration. Job sharing essentially replaces one worker with two, thereby increasing the size of the work force. At some point it will be necessary to add more staff in order to hire, supervise, account for, and pay the newly enlarged work force. Palo Alto, as a forerunner in job sharing, is potentially an excellent model for other municipalities to follow, if fiscal analysis of the program is possible. Unfortunately, due to incremental introductions of job sharers into various departments, indirect costs such as administrative and support personnel are virtually undetectable. Apparently because of the limited scope of the program, the City does not find it worthwhile to investigate these marginal financial costs.

Palo Alto is an unusually affluent and liberal community and as such does not hesitate to provide its job sharers with many of the same benefits as its full-time workers. Smaller and less wealthy communities will have to study their situations very closely before following Palo Alto's example. Therefore we do not believe that Palo Alto's employment budgeting attitude represents or would represent the typical city's response to the financial costs of shared work.

⁵Catalyst, "Employee ("Fringe") Benefits and Permanent Part-Time Personnel," A Catalyst Position Paper for Employers, (New York: {n.p.}, 1973).



BENEFITS AND COSTS TO THE JOB SHARER

A primary question an employer must face in forming a job sharing program is: Why does a person want to share a job; that is, what are the advantages which will accrue to a job sharer? The responses from Palo Alto job sharers fall under the general heading of morale, which reflects many factors. Five out of six sharers report increased morale (actual or anticipated) because job sharing allows them to:

1. pursue personal interests
2. work (use one's talents) and raise a family, or
3. work and go to school

The Supervising Librarian anticipates increases in sharer morale and job satisfaction for these reasons.

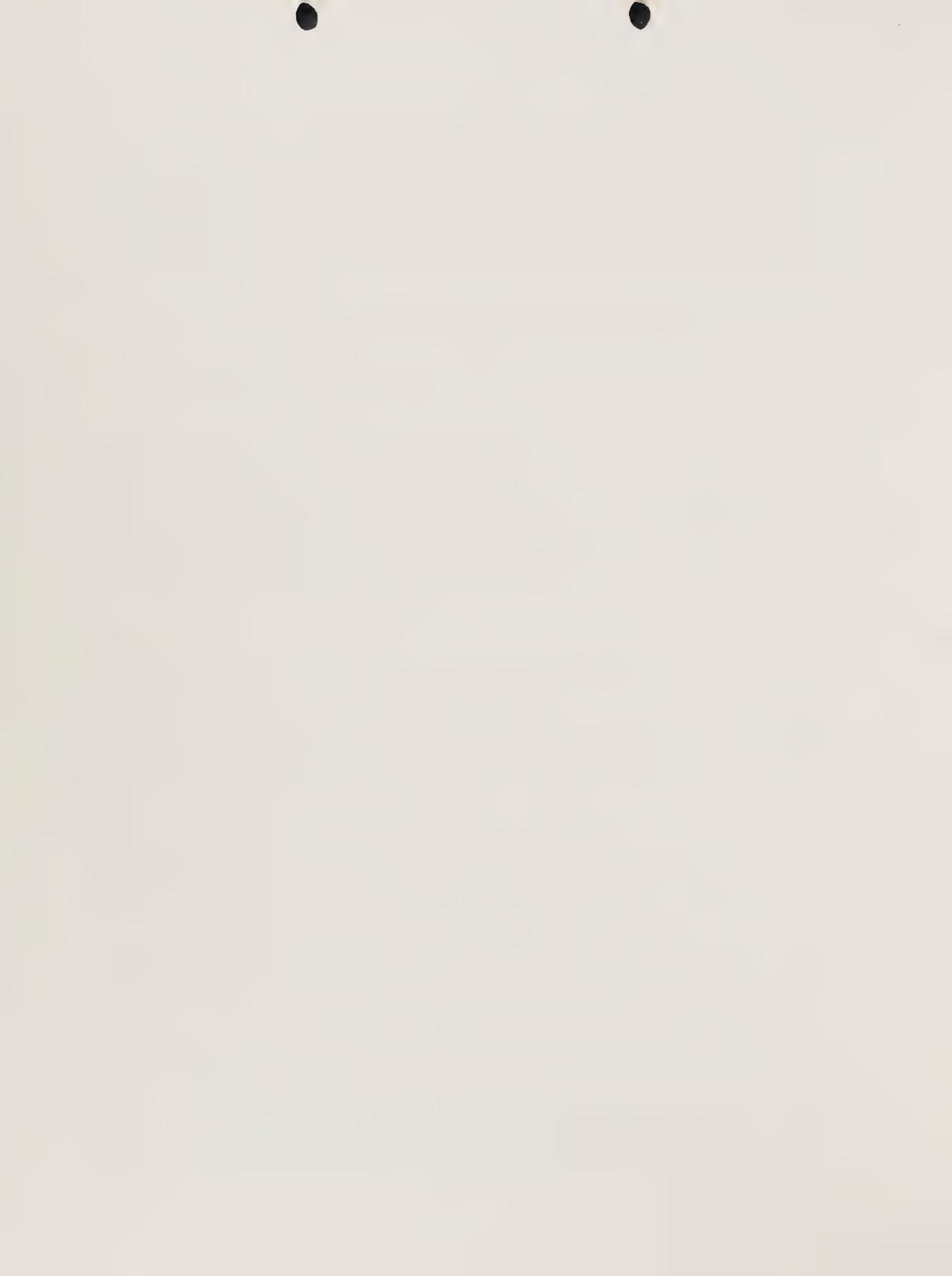
Several sharers mention very positive attitudes on their part because the City is responding to their personal needs in a satisfactory way. They view a change in status from a full-time to a shared position as desirable, while a change to what the City terms "casual part-time" work would not be. The distinction involves mainly the pay scale, benefit package and employee status. One sharer, wanting to cut back her hours as a full-time employee, previously saw only two choices: full-time work or dropping out of her field completely. For her, job sharing is a very good alternative to both.

Another contributing factor to increased morale is a high physical energy level maintained by sharers during their short shifts. They believe they are less fatigued both at the end of their work day and at the end of the week than their full-time co-workers. One sharer responds that she no longer feels as tense and tired as she did when working a forty-hour week. Another reports being more enthusiastic than her co-workers because, as she states, "I don't burn myself out like the forty-hour-a-week people do." Also, because of her peak hour schedule she is "not bored during dead hours."

The sharers are overwhelmingly positive with regard to the effects job sharing has upon both their work and their home life. Only one sharer reports low morale associated with the job sharing program. This is attributable to job sharing in the sense that she needs and would prefer full-time work.

Unlike the benefits, the costs of job sharing to the sharers vary. Two sharers, who have cut back on their hours from forty to twenty each week, mention the loss of income first. Yet, as one explains, "The money doesn't do you any good if you're killing yourself by working too much."

Another concern, expressed by supervisors and sharers alike, is the possibility of sharers having less influence than full-time employees in department decision-making. There appear to be two factors at work here. The first consists of the expectations of both full-time workers and job sharers which tend to build upon and reinforce each other. Some full-time employees may feel that they should have more input because they believe they are more familiar with the day-to-day operation of the department. Correct or



not, this attitude is communicated to sharers, who then readjust their behavior and actually do reduce their input. The other factor is that staff meetings (where department activities are discussed and ideas shared) may be held during hours when the sharer is not scheduled to work and cannot attend.

Career advancement may also be a potential cost to sharers. One department head expresses concern that job sharers should not be limited with regard to promotions. This individual feels it is important for department heads "not to be biased where job sharers are concerned" and "to keep an open mind." This implies that the important factor in advancement is not so much that one person has had twice as many hours on the job as another, but rather the variety of experiences and situations encountered and dealt with successfully.

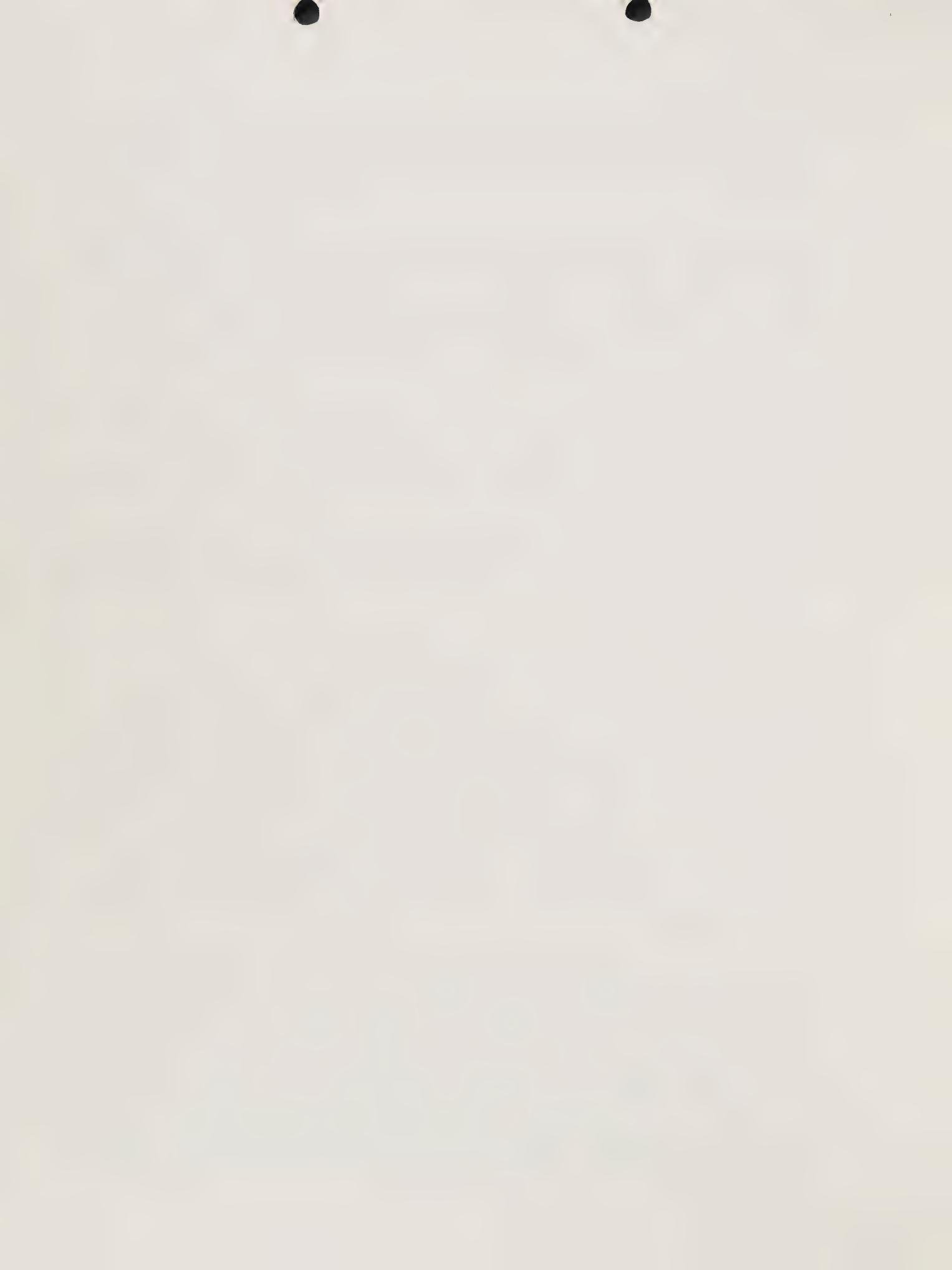
There is still another potential problem (mentioned by one sharer) which relates to meetings. If meeting times vary from week to week, it will mean that the sharer's schedule will be different each week if (s)he is to be scheduled to work in order to attend. This might make it difficult to arrange permanent child care.

A final problem mentioned is concerned with productivity. One respondent feels she is expected to produce as much as a full-time worker, even though she works only half as long. In this sense, she feels pressured and dissatisfied.

BENEFITS AND COSTS TO CO-WORKERS

Co-workers perceive both positive and negative effects of job sharing for themselves. The most salient benefit is reflected in rising morale due to new flexibility in the scheduling of hours for all department employees. Co-workers in departments where jobs are currently being shared indicate an increase in morale directly attributable to better scheduling. The survey evoked responses such as, "We are now able to schedule hours we want" and "It is easier to get the time off you want." Similarly, the Supervising Librarian explains that the branch library is small and only a few workers are employed there. This means that employees often work alone, even during peak hours. She states that "Sharing will permit two people to be there during peak times, which should reduce the tensions of our employees."

One potential cost to co-workers comes under the heading of friction. The supervisors did not expect any interpersonal friction to arise due to job sharing, except perhaps in the period of adjustment to the new system. With the exception of the comment by one sharer that a few co-workers may feel sharers are "getting off with less work," the sharers are unaware of any interpersonal friction due to the program. The survey of co-workers does indicate, however, one possible source of friction. Two out of twelve respondents expressed concern for job security. That is, they felt that the possibility of having their own full-time position changed to a shared job threatened their own work status. According to one employee, "Emphasis toward job sharing has created an unnecessarily low morale factor among



regular full-time employees who are dependent upon their jobs to provide a steady source of income for their families."

Schedule changes can also present problems. One co-worker comments that it has sometimes been difficult to readjust schedules of full-time employees when a job sharer could not come in at the last minute.

The survey of co-workers uncovered no problems with communication in one department where the nature of the work is very self-contained and requires a minimum of contact. However, in another department, two of the five co-workers responding cite occasional difficulties. One comments that there are sometimes "communication problems" due to the fact that "persons having half-time jobs sometimes do not work when I am on." Another employee sometimes finds it difficult to communicate on scheduling of work activities when a sharer does not "come in on a regular basis" or is "difficult to reach on the phone."

JOB CHARACTERISTICS

Since the City has not yet filled its quota of job sharing positions, we asked current job sharers, supervisors and co-workers to identify jobs in their departments which could and could not be shared. Additionally, respondents were asked to identify the specific characteristics of a job which make it amenable to or prohibit it from being shared. Responses vary widely, and at times different people place the same job in opposite categories. However, several generalizations as to the factors which allow a position to be shared did emerge.

Centrality to Department Operations -

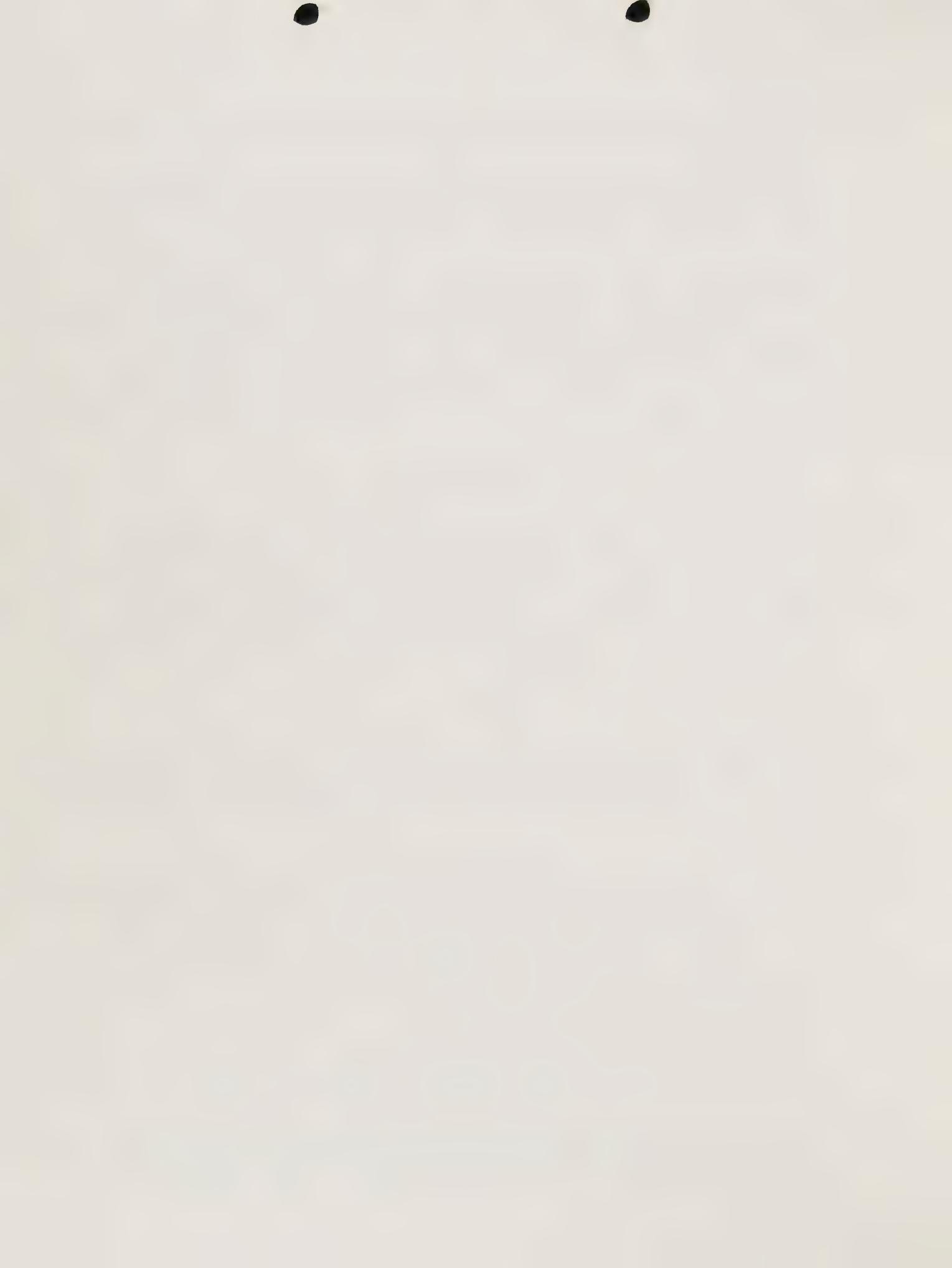
With regard to this property, jobs capable of being shared are those in which "discontinuity in performance...does not paralyze the department." Also, those jobs where the workers operate "individually" or "are pretty much on their own and not under very much supervision" are seen by some as shareable.

In contrast, terms like "coordination," "planning," "continuity," and "availability" are regularly associated with jobs which people feel could not be conveniently shared. In particular, one person foresees a compounding of problems if a shared managerial position has to supervise subordinates in shared jobs. When persons or agencies outside a department can also make demands on the job sharer (e.g. the relationship between the courts and parking monitors), further complications may appear.

Functions or Tasks the Job Holder Performs -

Jobs which could be shared are described as being "easily broken into parts" and having a "variety of unique duties" or "specific assigned tasks."

It is suggested by several people that the degree to which functions of a job are interrelated is the limiting factor in determining shareability. Some managerial and supervisory jobs may not be easily shared because of this.



Jobs requiring an afternoon follow-up of activities performed in the morning are also noted by respondents as difficult to share. In addition, those jobs which are not susceptible to clear task division and require some degree of coordination between the job sharers (e.g. writing reports) may lead to interpersonal frictions.

Level of Responsibility -

Most of the jobs people identify as shareable are both low on the pay scale and involve low levels of responsibility over other employees. However, jobs requiring high levels of individual responsibility or responsibility in performing important or even "vital" tasks are also suggested as shareable. The distinction is one of having the responsibility to manage other people or the responsibility to manage certain assignments, tasks, or even inanimate objects, such as the City's collection of library books; the former case is considered less shareable than the latter.

Supervisory jobs are frequently cited (by half of the survey respondents) as not being amenable to job sharing. In addition to the centrality and functions of these jobs, the difficulties anticipated by having two sources of authority make many personnel hesitant about having these jobs shared. One possible problem might arise from "differences in theory of operation." One supervisor warns of the danger of subordinates playing the co-supervisors against one another, as for example when one supervisor denies a request and the employee attempts to have the same request approved by the co-supervisor. While supervisors are aware of these problems, in general they feel that they are not insurmountable.

Scheduling -

One aspect of some jobs which not only makes sharing possible, but even advantageous, is that sometimes it is not necessary to have a person on a particular job for eight continuous hours. Some jobs require a worker's presence early in the morning and late in the evening, although perhaps not in the afternoon. While it might be difficult to find a single employee willing to break up his or her day so drastically, two half-time workers may be readily available. On the other hand, some jobs affected by peak periods require eight work hours in less than eight clock hours. By doubling up or overlapping, job sharing facilitates this type of scheduling.

Public Contact -

One survey respondent points out that it might be advantageous to share jobs which require dealing with a hostile public. It is difficult for anyone to handle the physical and emotional tensions which arise when handling complaints or enforcing regulations. Fewer hours per day or per week might make these jobs less wearing.

Other -

Certain jobs will present more of a financial cost to the employer, if shared, than others. These types may best be avoided. One factor involved is the amount of set-up and break-down time required. If much time is spent on



these activities the proportion of time spent in productive work decreases. Another factor is the extent of training an employer must provide before the employee can begin to work effectively in a position. At worst, training two employees for a shared position can take twice as long and be twice as expensive as training one for a full-time position.

Many of the respondents picture job sharing as dividing the work day in half. Perhaps we could conceive of job sharing as a certain number of hours per week or days per month or in a proportion other than 50/50. For example, in addition to splitting an eight hour day into four-hour shifts, one could also split a job into shifts such as one week on, one week off, or two weeks on, two weeks off. On the other hand, different ways of dividing work may each have their own unique difficulties. In any event, many combinations are possible and should be considered by supervisors when they are deciding what type of work schedule would best meet the needs of their respective departments and the job sharers.

Only occasionally our respondents think that a job could not be shared under any circumstances. To share some jobs will obviously require extremely compatible people, extensive communications, or an extra effort.

EMPLOYEES' WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH JOB SHARERS

In order to ascertain how positive or negative employees' attitudes were (or would be) to job sharing in their immediate environment, the following question was asked of all survey respondents: "Would you be willing to work in a department where some of the jobs were shared?" Of the people who answered the questionnaire, almost all (35/38) say that they would be willing to do so. Twenty-nine of the thirty-eight indicate an outright willingness. Six answer that they would be willing to work with sharers only under certain conditions (or with some reservations). The concern expressed here is that the job sharing position(s) not affect the efficiency of the co-workers' performance. As two people state, they would work under such conditions as long as the job sharing did not put "an extra burden on the full-time staff." Only three of the thirty-eight respondents answer "No" to this question; two of the individuals are currently working with sharers. Only one of the negative responses includes an explanation of the reason for the "No": The person feels that, as a sharer, (s)he "would not have the opportunity to put in {his or her} maximum ability (sic)." Finally, six of the twenty-nine "Yes" respondents volunteer that they could see themselves as sharing a job - in fact, one even says that he would actually "prefer to work a twenty-hour week" (his emphasis).

REFLECTIONS ON JOB SHARING: SOME TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

In closing, we would like to offer some general impressions of the concept of job sharing, including our perception of both the short term and long term consequences of the widespread implementation of such a program. First of all, it can clearly be seen that there are two groups of actors in any job sharing program: employees and employers. Both parties must sense benefits for themselves before they will enter into this particular arrangement. In the case of Palo Alto, the City expects to realize increased



productivity and a better record on affirmative action without significantly increasing its costs. The persons sharing jobs feel that the reduced working time more than compensates for the reduction in income (in the sense of former full-time employees) or is sufficient to meet their needs (in the case of people just entering the job). Job sharing is not implemented only because it is "a nice thing to do." It appears that both employers and employees perceive this to be the case. To be sure, the job sharers have overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward sharing. They feel the City is adjusting well to meet their needs, both personal and occupational. Yet, they are very conscious that the City benefits too.

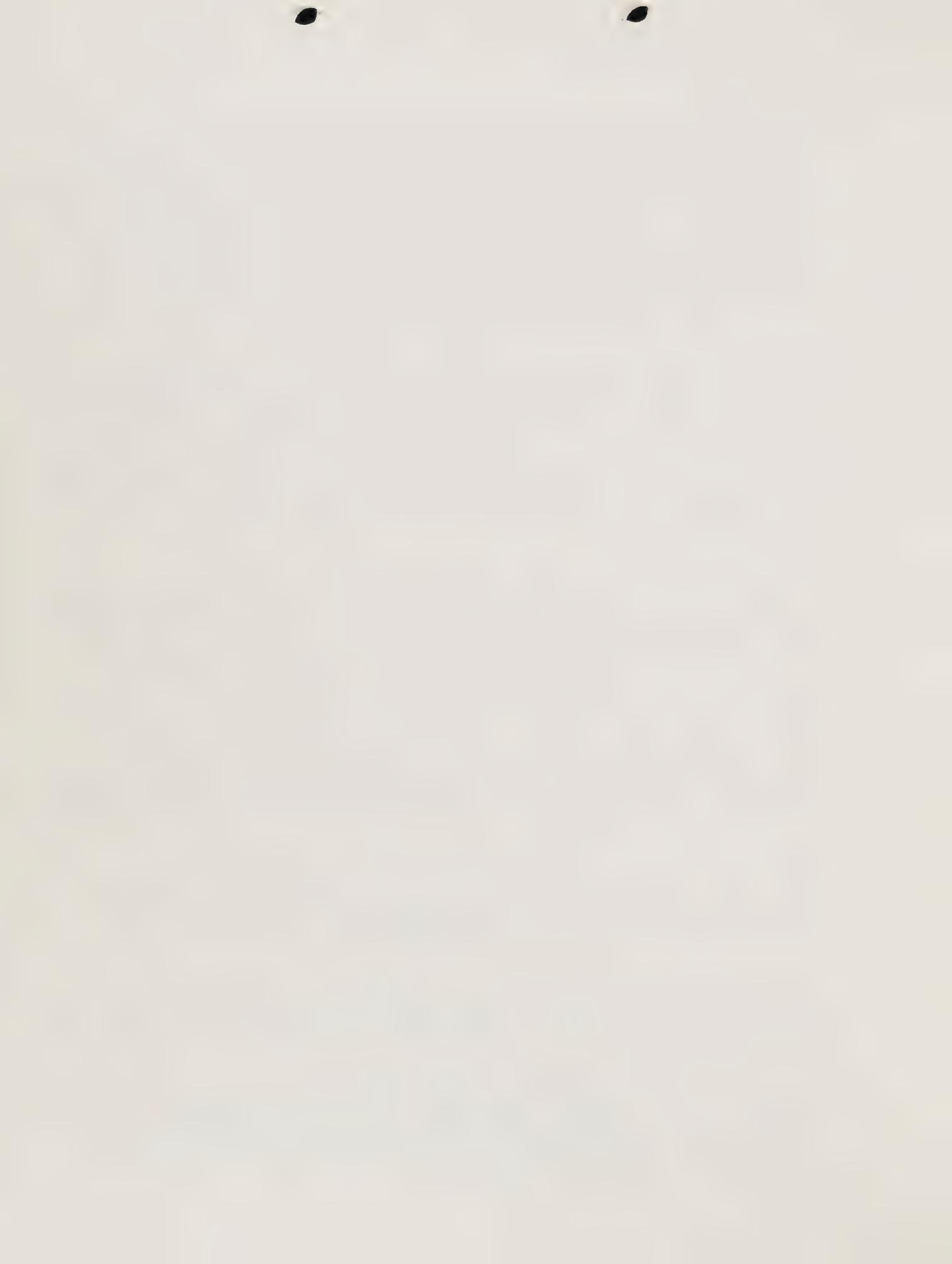
Several points alluded to in the body of the paper need to be stressed here. Job sharing can serve a very useful purpose as a technique for on-the-job training, particularly in cases where one employee is preparing to retire or knows of an impending departure well in advance. In the former instance it permits the new employee to get used to the job before beginning to work full-time, as well as allowing the departing worker to become accustomed to retirement. An example of the latter case could be when an employee becomes pregnant and wishes to leave the labor force temporarily. The lightened workload, especially in the latter stages of pregnancy, might be appreciated.

Also essential to note is that certain conditions must be met if the implementation of a job sharing program is to be successful. The need for positive, supportive supervisors cannot be overemphasized. We believe that job sharing cannot be successful unless the supervisor has a positive attitude toward the concept of job sharing and is very open to new ways of working. In addition, unless supervisors are very careful in laying groundwork for the program in advance, misunderstandings and anxieties are likely to develop. The supervisor should be sensitive to this and be prepared to deal with these problems as they arise. The final demand made of supervisors is that they ensure that sharers become an integral part of the department and of the City's work force. Sharers should have the same input into the decision-making process as full-time personnel and have opportunities for advancement as do regular employees.

Clearly, the question of promotion for sharers will have to be faced. There are primarily two factors which are most heavily weighed in these decisions: work performance and tenure on the job. While it is in the interest of sharers to emphasize work performance, unions and full-time employees will resist having seniority minimized.

As far as employees are concerned, it is important for all employees to be patient when job sharing is instituted and to understand that there will be a time of adjustment and experimentation before the best arrangements can be determined.

Finally, it must be recognized that job sharing is not for everyone. Some employees, notably heads of households, out of necessity require full-time employment and the accompanying salaries. In response to the survey question of whether or not any jobs in his/her department could be shared, one respondent calls attention to this point:



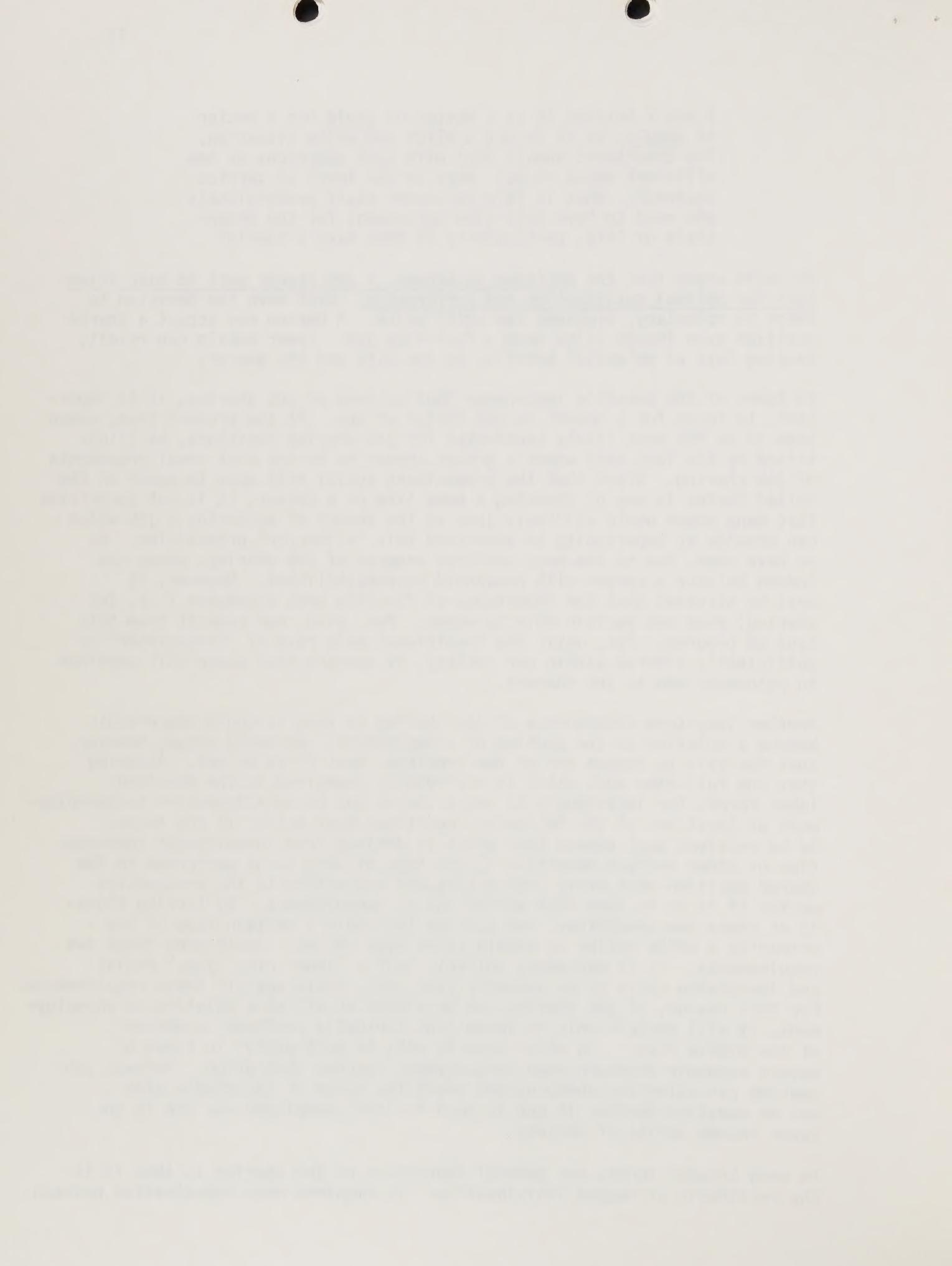
I don't believe it is a matter of could but a matter of should, as it is not a black and white situation. The department should deal with such questions as how efficient would it be? What is the level of service desired?...What is fair to career staff professionals who need to have full-time employment for the essentials of life, particularly if they have a family?

We would argue that the decision to become a job sharer must be made voluntary for optimal satisfaction and performance. Even when the decision to share is voluntary, problems can still arise. A person may accept a shared position even though (s)he needs a full-time job. Lower morale can result, causing loss of potential benefits to the City and the sharer.

In terms of the possible long-range implications of job sharing, it is important to focus for a moment on the factor of sex. At the present time, women seem to be the most likely candidates for job sharing positions, as illustrated by the fact that women's groups appear to be the most vocal proponents of job sharing. Given that the predominant social role open to women in the United States is one of choosing a home life or a career, it is not surprising that many women would willingly jump at the chance of accepting a job which can provide an opportunity to transcend this "either/or" proposition. As we have seen, due to the many positive aspects of job sharing, women can indeed balance a career with household responsibilities. However, it must be stressed that the importance of flexible work schedules (i.e., job sharing) does not pertain only to women. Men, also, can benefit from this type of program. Yet, until the traditional male role of "breadwinner" is sufficiently altered within our society, it appears that women will continue to outnumber men as job sharers.

Another long-term consequence of job sharing is that it could conceivably become a solution to the problem of unemployment. We would argue, however, that for this to happen one of two conditions must first be met. Assuming that the full-time work ethic is not totally ingrained in the American labor force, for individuals to see a shared job as an alternative to unemployment at least one of the following conditions must exist: 1) the income to be received must exceed that which is derived from unemployment compensation or other welfare benefits; 2) the type of work to be performed in the shared position must prove interesting and attractive to the prospective worker if it is to lure that worker out of unemployment. By looking closely at these two conditions, one can see that only a certain type of job - primarily a white collar or middle class type of job - could meet these two requirements. It is extremely unlikely that a "lower class job," menial and low-paying (such as an assembly line job), could satisfy these requirements. For this reason, if job sharing can be viewed at all as a solution to unemployment, it will pertain only to those jobs typically confined to members of the middle class - in which case it will be most useful in times of severe economic downturn when unemployment reaches this group. Perhaps job sharing can alleviate unemployment among the ranks of the middle class, but we question whether it can do much for the unemployed who are in the lower income strata of society.

In even broader terms, our general impression of job sharing is that it is the antithesis of rugged individualism. It requires more coordination between



workers than most Americans are accustomed to. Often it requires not only sharing the workload, but also sharing the credit or blame for an entire project. The problem of the proverbial "weakest link" can become a reality.

We now want to specifically address the three problem areas (stated in the introduction) to which job sharing is seen as a possible solution. We find that job sharing:

1. Does seem to improve the quality of work and increase employee satisfaction.
2. Appears to be a viable way of structuring work to better accommodate working women.
3. Can be a solution to unemployment but only under certain conditions.

To conclude, we see job sharing as a worthwhile program to implement. While recognizing its limitations, we find many positive reasons for job sharing. We hope and expect to see the expansion of shared work patterns in the public sector.

